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SUBJECT: Public and Experts Vote on Key Events of Thirty Years of  
Reform and Opening

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¶1. (SBU) Summary and Comment: The thirtieth anniversary of China's "reform and opening" policy is emerging as topic number one among south China government and media circles. Media outlets are beating the drums to stir public interest in the occasion. Two local media outlets working with government entities have conducted or are in the process of conducting polls to choose the most significant events over the past 30 years. In addition, government-affiliated think tanks and academic institutions have assigned their best thinkers to assess the impact of China's modern history at symposia planned for December. COMMENT: These initiatives are aimed both at reminding the people of the successes achieved under the last 30 years of Communist Party rule, but also at cultivating support for the next stage of economic reform, which for now features Wang Yang's ideas of mind emancipation (not a new policy but certainly one increasingly identified with him here in the south) and the double transfer policy. End summary and Comment.

Media Asks Public to Assess Events of Last 30 Years  
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¶2. (U) Nanfang Press Group, working with the Propaganda Department of the Guangdong Communist Party Committee and China Mobile, announced October 15 the top 20 most influential events in 30 years of reform chosen by their public poll and specially chosen "experts." Approximately 2.5 million Guangdong residents participated in the online poll. The results were weighted so that the public poll and experts' survey each accounted for 50 percent of the final results.

¶3. (U) The 35 candidates included important policy landmark events like the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs) in Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou in 1979 and Deng Xiaoping's famous southern tour in 1992. The list also included less momentous - and perhaps less comprehensible in terms of inclusion - occasions like the rise in popularity of Guangdong pop music in the 1980s and the 1991 designation of Guangdong as China's number one province of mountain forestation. All four of these events were chosen among the 20 winners in the poll. (Note: All of the winners are listed at the end of this message. End note.)

¶4. (U) Guangzhou Daily, in association with the Guangdong Economic System Reform Research Society, an organization controlled by the

provincial government, is in the process of conducting a similar poll to choose the 30 most significant events from a list of 50. Readers have until October 20 to vote and the results will be announced on October 25.

15. (U) In addition, Nanfang Press Group ran a poll to choose the 20 individuals who have most touched the lives of the people of Guangdong over the last 30 years. The top three winners were Ren Zhongyi, the province's former party secretary and reform pioneer; Yuan Geng, former vice chairman of China Merchants Group who pioneered industrial reforms in Shenzhen; and Chen Guanyu, a famous Shenzhen charity volunteer. Other winners included Zhong Nanshan, the doctor famous for his work during the SARS crisis; Xian Dongmei, Olympic gold medalist in judo; several professors; innovative engineers and business managers; and a few people who risked their lives to save others.

#### Academia Prepares to Continue the Discussion

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16. (SBU) When asked their thoughts about the polls, academics at the Guangzhou and Shenzhen Academies of Social Sciences told us that many of their colleagues were currently preparing papers on this topic to be presented at a Guangdong Provincial Government symposium that will be held on December 5. The Guangzhou municipal government will also host a similar symposium in December.

17. (SBU) Professor Peng Peng of Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences is one of the scholars preparing a paper and offered his comments on the media polls. Peng believes that any list of the most significant events must include the central government's approval of "special and flexible" policies for Guangdong Province in 1979, which led to the creation of SEZs in Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou. Without these fundamental early reforms to loosen rigid central controls, he said, Guangdong provincial and local governments would

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not have had the ability to make key changes over time and lead the nation in thirty years of economic growth. Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences Professor Le Zheng agreed with Peng's assessment and added that without the policy flexibility and the creation of SEZs, China would have never succeeded in attracting the foreign direct investment that led to the country's economic miracle.

18. (SBU) Peng went on to say that the second critical step was the central government leaders' periodic site visits to reaffirm the original reform policies - from Deng Xiaoping's famous Guangdong inspection and speech to Jiang Zemin's south China announcement of the "three represents" in 2000 and Hu Jintao's call for "scientific development". In each case, China's most senior leader endorsed the reform process while visiting the province, and helped propel the province and the country forward with increased commitment to the reform agenda, according to Peng.

#### Comment: Looking Back, Moving Forward

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19. (SBU) These efforts to reflect on the past thirty years are significant not only because the provincial leadership is eager to underscore the successes of "reform and opening" and how life has improved during the last three decades of Communist Party rule. They are also part of an effort to cultivate support for further reforms to come. Guangdong is coming to the end of the stage in its economic development where growth is driven by export manufacturing in labor-intensive industries. The leadership needs to shore-up support for its plans to move Guangdong's economy into high-tech, financial and other service industries. This won't be easy and the process will be disruptive to many of those with vested interests in the current economic structure. This review also provides the political cover for more open discourse about what reforms have succeeded and what might work in the future as government leaders attempt to ensure thirty more years of growth and development. Congen Guangzhou will continue to monitor the commemoration of the anniversary of "reform and opening" as it picks up steam in the coming months and to assess what it reveals about the future of reform in China. End comment.

## Nanfang Press Group 20 Most Significant Events

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¶10. The following is Congen Guangzhou's informal translation of the Nanfang Press Group winners:

- 1. In 1979, the country's first export-oriented manufacturing zone was founded in Shekou, Shenzhen.
- 2. In 1979, Guangdong established the Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou SEZs.
- 3. In 1981, Zhaoqing farmer Chen Zhixiong became the first fish farm contractor, inspiring a national debate on market-oriented reforms.
- 4. In the 1980s, Guangdong pop music became popular throughout the whole country.
- 5. In 1983, the first Sino-foreign joint-venture hotel, the White Swan, was inaugurated.
- 6. In 1987, Shenzhen became the first city in the country to auction land-use rights.
- 7. In 1987, Guangzhou launched China's first mobile phone system.
- 8. In 1987, Guangdong was the first to promote youth volunteer service.
- 9. In 1991, Guangdong was honored as "China's Number 1 Province for Mountain Forestation".
- 10. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping inspected Guangdong and made his famous speech, generating support for reform.
- 11. In 1992, Zhuhai City began paying millions in rewards to scientific and technological talents in the city.
- 12. In 1992, The "Shunde Model," a package of reform of government operations and property rights, was introduced in Shunde District of Foshan City.
- 13. In 2000, Jiang Zemin inspected Guangdong and put forward the "three represents".
- 14. In 2003, Hu Jintao inspected Guangdong and put forward the "scientific development approach."
- 15. In 2003, Guangdong fought against SARS.
- 16. In 2004, Pan-PRD Regional Cooperation was initiated.
- 17. In 2007, the 100th Canton Fair was held.
- 18. In 2008, Guangdong fought against the severe winter storm disaster.

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- 19. In 2008, Guangdong aided the earthquake disaster zone in Sichuan.
- 20. In 2008, the "mind emancipation" campaign rolled out in Guangdong.

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